

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4233, the Student Veterans Counseling Centers Eligibility Act.

This bill would allow student veterans to access readjustment counseling and peer support services at vet centers.

Student veterans have unique needs and stressors. This bill would help them get the support they require to thrive in school and in their post-military lives.

I am grateful to my good friend and committee colleague, Dr. GREG MURPHY, for introducing this bill. I thank him for his leadership on behalf of student veterans, and I am confident this bill would benefit them for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, I urge every one of my colleagues to support H.R. 4233 today.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MURPHY), the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. MURPHY of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bipartisan bill, H.R. 4233, the Student Veterans Counseling Centers Eligibility Act.

The issue to which I will speak is exceedingly personal to me and my district, as I represent close to 90,000 veterans, most of whom are or will be receiving benefits via the Post-9/11 GI Bill or the Montgomery GI Bill.

The transition from Active Duty to civilian life can be challenging for some of our servicemembers. It can be tremendously difficult for many of our servicemembers to return to education after sacrificing so much for our Nation abroad. This is especially true for older and nontraditional student veterans.

A few months ago, alongside Ranking Member BOST, I had the privilege of introducing the Student Veterans Counseling Centers Eligibility Act. It passed out of the Veterans' Affairs Committee with a unanimous vote.

Our Nation's veterans represent the very best among us here in the United States, but many serve at great personal cost. A recent RAND study reported that 20 percent of veterans on the GI Bill experience feelings of depression or PTSD. That 20 percent amounts to over 170,000 veterans, which is almost double the number I mentioned previously of the veterans I represent in my district.

As one can imagine, serving as a member of our Armed Forces can be extremely stressful. Too often, we see the tragedy of our veterans losing their battle with mental health issues when returning from service. A very tragic and somber fact is that the VA currently estimates 18 veterans a day commit suicide. In fact, 46 percent of our military students report suicidal thoughts compared to only 6 percent of their nonmilitary peers.

If we can provide mental health services to assist just a single veteran who is struggling, then I believe it is our sworn duty to do so. We have the opportunity now with the Student Vet-

erans Counseling Centers Eligibility Act.

Education poses one of the most beneficial yet stressful areas of transition for our veterans. The intention of this bill is to aid more of our veterans who are readjusting to civilian lives while providing overdue access to vital mental health resources.

Helping veterans succeed in their education and civilian lives is one of the most important ways we can thank them for their service.

I have spoken with some of these student veterans. I have heard their stories. These student veterans have had to wait weeks to even months for a mental health appointment if their mental health crisis was not deemed urgent. Unfortunately, many of our veterans do not have the luxury of weeks or months to wait to see a mental health provider.

Furthermore, private mental health can be inaccessible for those not utilizing the benefits of the GI Bill. An average therapy session could cost between \$60 to \$120, with the higher end reaching over \$250 per session. Even with health insurance, premiums often can be \$50 per session.

The Student Veterans Counseling Centers Eligibility Act would provide expanded counseling and mental health services to those student veterans through the VA's Readjustment Counseling Centers, known as vet centers.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. MURPHY of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am extremely honored and proud to sponsor this bill, and I am grateful to Ranking Member BOST for his support as an original cosponsor and to all of my Republican and Democratic colleagues who have come together to support this very critical bipartisan legislation.

I am also thankful to the Student Veterans of America for their support.

I ask all Members for bipartisan support.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 4233, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4233.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

BRINGING REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS TO VETERANS EDUCATION ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 147) to amend titles 10 and 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements to transitional services for separating members of the Armed Forces and educational assistance under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 147

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Bringing Registered Apprenticeships to Veterans Education Act" or the "BRAVE Act".

SEC. 2. EDUCATION FOR SEPARATING MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES REGARDING REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS.

Section 1144(b)(1) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting "(including apprenticeship programs registered under the Act of August 16, 1937 (50 Stat. 664; commonly referred to as the 'National Apprenticeship Act') and approved under chapters 30 through 36 of title 38)" after "employment opportunities".

SEC. 3. WEBSITES REGARDING APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS.

(a) WEBSITE UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF SECRETARY OF LABOR.—The Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training, in coordination with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, shall establish a user-friendly website (or update an existing website) that is available to the public on which veterans can find information about apprenticeship programs registered under the Act of August 16, 1937 (50 Stat. 664; commonly referred to as the "National Apprenticeship Act") and approved under chapters 30 through 36 of title 38, United States Code. Such information shall be searchable and sortable by occupation and location, and include, with regard to each such program, the following:

- (1) A description, including any cost to a veteran.
- (2) Contact information.
- (3) Whether the program has been endorsed by a veterans service organization or nonprofit organization that caters to veterans.
- (4) Whether the program prefers to hire veterans.
- (5) Each certification or degree an individual earns by completing the program.

(b) COORDINATION WITH OTHER WEBSITE.—The Assistant Secretary shall update all information regarding programs for veterans listed on apprenticeship.gov (or any successor website) to include the information specified under subsection (a).

SEC. 4. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled "Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation" for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on H.R. 147, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 147, the Bringing Registered Apprenticeships to Veterans Education Act, or BRAVE Act, as amended.

This bill increases access to information regarding registered apprenticeships for veterans. Registered apprenticeships are an important component of our workforce system. They provide on-the-job training with an employer that teaches workers the practical and theoretical skills they need to succeed in a field, all while earning a paycheck.

The Department of Labor validates registered apprenticeships to ensure that participants are receiving high-quality instruction and training.

At the end of their program, apprentices receive a national, industry-recognized credential in their field.

This bill would require the Department of Labor to improve access to registered apprenticeships for transitioning servicemembers and veterans by maintaining a searchable website that connects them with employer programs that are endorsed by VSOs and other veteran-specific groups.

Registered apprenticeships provide a unique pathway into in-demand, high-quality jobs, and the BRAVE Act will make it easier for veterans to learn and earn when training for their careers.

This legislation is supported by numerous VSOs, including Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Paralyzed Veterans of America.

I thank Speaker PELOSI and Leader HOYER for bringing this legislation to the floor, and I urge the rest of my colleagues to support this legislation to improve employability for veterans through apprenticeships.

I also thank Chairman ADAM SMITH of the House Armed Services Committee, who has agreed to forgo committee action on H.R. 147, as amended, so that it can be considered on the floor today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, November 15, 2021.

Hon. ADAM SMITH,
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SMITH: I write concerning H.R. 147 as amended, the Bringing Registered Apprenticeships to Veterans Education Act or the BRAVE Act. I appreciate your willing-

ness to work cooperatively on this legislation.

I acknowledge that provisions of the bill fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Armed Services under House Rule X, and that your Committee will forgo action on H.R. 147 to expedite floor consideration. I further acknowledge that the inaction of your Committee with respect to the bill does not waive any future jurisdictional claim over the matters contained in the bill that fall within your jurisdiction. I will also support the appointment of Committee on Armed Services conferees during any House-Senate conference convened on this legislation.

Lastly, I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the Congressional Record during floor consideration of the bill. Thank you again for your cooperation regarding the legislation. I look forward to continuing to work with you as the measure moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

MARK TAKANO,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, November 15, 2021.

Hon. MARK TAKANO,
Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. TAKANO: I write concerning H.R. 147 as amended, the Bringing Registered Apprenticeships to Veterans Education Act or the BRAVE Act. As a result of your having consulted with us on provisions within H.R. 147 that fall within the Rule X jurisdiction of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I forego any further consideration of this bill so that it may proceed expeditiously to the House floor for consideration.

The Committee on Armed Services takes this action with our mutual understanding that by foregoing consideration of H.R. 147 at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over subject matter contained in this or similar legislation and that our committee will be appropriately consulted and involved as this bill or similar legislation moves forward so that we may address any remaining issues in our jurisdiction. Further, I request your support for the appointment of conferees from the Committee on Armed Services during any House-Senate conference convened on this or related legislation.

Please place a copy of this letter and your response acknowledging our jurisdictional interest into the Congressional Record during consideration of the measure on the House floor. Thank you for the cooperative spirit in which you have worked regarding this matter and others between our respective committees.

Sincerely,

ADAM SMITH,
Chairman.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 147, as amended, the BRAVE Act.

Every year, nearly 200,000 servicemen and -women transition out of Active Duty and into the civilian sector.

This bill would require the Department of Defense to provide information on apprenticeship programs to separating servicemembers who are practicing in the Transition Assistance Program.

The BRAVE Act would also require the Department of Labor to establish a website that includes information on national apprenticeships and those ap-

proved for the GI Bill benefits so it is readily available to the transitioning servicemembers.

Last month's unemployment numbers showed that while the unemployment rate for nonveterans decreased, the unemployment rate for veterans increased slightly. This is concerning, and I am hopeful that improving the way that we provide information to our veterans about available apprenticeships may provide veterans with more opportunity for great jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support H.R. 147, as amended, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. NORCROSS), my good friend and the author of this legislation. Congressman NORCROSS serves on the House Armed Services Committee; Education and Labor Committee; and the Science, Space, and Technology Committee.

Mr. NORCROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

This is National Apprenticeship Week, and what better time for the passage of H.R. 147, the BRAVE Act.

I am a product of a registered apprenticeship program and the father of a veteran.

The Bringing Registered Apprenticeships to Veterans Education Act, or the BRAVE Act, would help those returning veterans find good-paying jobs and careers.

When we send our servicemembers to war, we train them and equip them, and we give them the skills they need to protect and defend the United States. We do this because we want them to succeed wherever they are needed, be it on the battlefield or rendering humanitarian assistance around the world. They deserve the same level of support when they leave the service and transition back to civilian life.

One of the best ways to help our vets transition is by providing them meaningful work opportunities or careers. Registered apprenticeships are one of the best ways, if not the best way, in the history of the United States for people to gain those skills. Registered apprenticeships allow the returning soldier to earn while they learn in-demand skills that are so desperately needed for family-sustaining careers.

Ninety-two percent of those who complete a registered apprenticeship program stay employed, and the average salary for graduates is \$72,000. That is nearly \$20,000 more than the average college graduate, with no student debt.

The BRAVE Act will connect veterans to these resources, helping them to transition to fulfilling civilian careers.

It is fitting that the vote for the BRAVE Act takes place during National Apprenticeship Week.

I urge all of my colleagues to support our veterans in their pursuit of a good career and a good-paying job by voting for the BRAVE Act.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this

bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 147, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 147, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

□ 1330

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON UNITED STATES OUTLYING AREAS AND FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3730) to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs an Advisory Committee on United States Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3730

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON UNITED STATES OUTLYING AREAS AND FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 5 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 548. Advisory Committee on United States Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States

“(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish an advisory committee, to be known as the ‘Advisory Committee on United States Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States’, to provide advice and guidance to the Secretary on matters relating to covered veterans.

“(b) DUTIES.—The duties of the Committee shall be the following:

“(1) To advise the Secretary on matters relating to covered veterans, including how the Secretary can improve the programs and services of the Department to better serve such veterans.

“(2) To identify for the Secretary evolving issues of relevance to covered veterans.

“(3) To propose clarifications, recommendations, and solutions to address issues raised by covered veterans.

“(4) To provide a forum for covered veterans, veterans service organizations serving covered veterans, and the Department to dis-

cuss issues and proposals for changes to regulations, policies, and procedures of the Department.

“(5) To identify priorities for and provide advice to the Secretary on appropriate strategies for consultation with veterans service organizations serving covered veterans.

“(6) To encourage the Secretary to work with other departments and agencies of the Federal Government and Congress to ensure covered veterans are provided the full benefits of their status as covered veterans.

“(7) To highlight contributions of covered veterans in the Armed Forces.

“(8) To conduct other duties as determined appropriate by the Secretary.

“(c) MEMBERSHIP.—(1) The Committee shall be comprised of 15 voting members appointed by the Secretary.

“(2) In appointing members pursuant to paragraph (1), the Secretary shall ensure the following:

“(A) At least one member is appointed to represent covered veterans in each of the following areas:

“(i) American Samoa.

“(ii) Guam.

“(iii) Puerto Rico.

“(iv) The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

“(v) The Virgin Islands of the United States.

“(vi) The Federated States of Micronesia.

“(vii) The Republic of the Marshall Islands.

“(viii) The Republic of Palau.

“(B) Not fewer than half of the members appointed are covered veterans, unless the Secretary determines that an insufficient number of qualified covered veterans are available.

“(C) Each member appointed resides in an area specified in subparagraph (A).

“(3) In appointing members pursuant to paragraph (1), the Secretary may consult with any Member of Congress who represents an area specified in paragraph (2)(A).

“(d) TERMS; VACANCIES.—(1) A member of the Committee shall be appointed for a term of two years.

“(2) Not later than 180 days after receiving notice of a vacancy in the Committee, the Secretary shall fill the vacancy in the same manner as the original appointment.

“(e) MEETING FORMAT AND FREQUENCY.—(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), the Committee shall meet in-person with the Secretary not less frequently than twice each year and hold monthly conference calls as necessary.

“(2) Meetings held under paragraph (1) may be conducted virtually during a public health emergency declared by the Secretary of Health and Human Services pursuant to section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d) or any renewal of such declaration.

“(f) ADDITIONAL REPRESENTATION.—(1) Representatives of relevant departments and agencies of the Federal Government may attend meetings of the Committee and provide information to the Committee.

“(2) One representative of the Department shall attend each meeting of the Committee.

“(3) Representatives attending meetings under this subsection—

“(A) shall not be considered voting members of the Committee; and

“(B) may not receive additional compensation for services performed with respect to the Committee.

“(g) SUBCOMMITTEES.—(1) The Committee may establish subcommittees.

“(2) The Secretary may, in consultation with the Committee, appoint a member to a subcommittee established under paragraph (1) who is not a member of the Committee.

“(3) A subcommittee established under paragraph (1) may enhance the function of

the Committee, but may not supersede the authority of the Committee or provide direct advice or work products to the Secretary.

“(h) REPORTS.—(1) Not less frequently than once each year, the Committee shall submit to the Secretary and the appropriate committees of Congress a report containing such recommendations as the Committee may have for legislative or administrative action.

“(2) Not later than 90 days after the date on which the Secretary receives a report under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a written response to the report after—

“(A) giving the Committee an opportunity to review such written response; and

“(B) including in such written response any comments the Committee considers appropriate.

“(3) Not less frequently than once every two years, the Committee shall submit to the Secretary and the appropriate committees of Congress a report describing the activities of the Committee during the previous two years.

“(4) The Secretary shall make publicly available on an internet website of the Department—

“(A) each report the Secretary receives under paragraph (1);

“(B) each written response the Secretary submits under paragraph (2); and

“(C) each report the Secretary receives under paragraph (3).

“(i) COMMITTEE PERSONNEL MATTERS.—A member of the Committee shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for an employee of an agency under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5 while away from the home or regular place of business of the member in the performance of the duties of the Committee.

“(j) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary shall consult with veterans service organizations serving covered veterans.

“(k) FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT EXEMPTION.—Section 14 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall not apply to the Committee.

“(l) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘appropriate committees of Congress’ means—

“(A) the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

“(B) the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate.

“(2) The term ‘Committee’ means the Advisory Committee on United States Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States established under subsection (a).

“(3) The term ‘covered veteran’ means a veteran residing in an area specified in subsection (c)(2)(A).

“(4) The term ‘veterans service organization serving covered veterans’ means any organization that—

“(A) serves the interests of covered veterans;

“(B) has covered veterans in substantive and policymaking positions within the organization; and

“(C) has demonstrated experience working with covered veterans.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 5 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 547 the following new item:

“548. Advisory Committee on United States Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States.”.

(b) DEADLINE FOR ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish the advisory